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RESTRUCTURING AND REVITALIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the annex to General Assembly resolution 45/264 of 13 May 1991 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, the Secretary-General was requested to submit an annual progress report to the Assembly, starting with its forty-seventh session, on the implementation of the results of the restructuring and revitalization process in the economic, social and related fields. The present report has been prepared in accordance with that request.

2. The Secretary-General submitted the first of the progress reports mandated in the above-cited resolution to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session (A/47/534). That report went into considerable detail in reviewing the experience of the implementation of Assembly resolution 45/264. In the current progress report, the Secretary-General intends to concentrate on a limited number of issues in view of the fact that the information supplied with regard to most of the issues covered in the previous report do not appear to require an update. Consequently, the present report will deal with issues relating to the coordination and operational activities segments of the Economic and Social Council and the joint meetings of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC).

3. Attention is also drawn to the provision in General Assembly resolution 45/264 which calls for a review at the forty-eighth session of the Assembly in the light of experience of reforms agreed upon with a view to enhancing the impact and effectiveness of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. The Secretary-General was not asked to prepare a report in connection with this review. It should be noted that negotiations are ongoing on a follow-up resolution to Assembly resolution 45/264 with a view to adopting measures to clarify the functional responsibilities of the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, streamline

agendas and enhance the authority of the Council in respect of operational activities for development. The Assembly may prefer to postpone the review until the outcome of the ongoing negotiations is known. In that regard, the Secretary-General continues to express the hope that Member States will find it possible to reach agreement on measures to deepen and strengthen the reform and revitalization process at the intergovernmental level in the economic and social fields.

II. COORDINATION SEGMENT

4. In his previous progress report, the Secretary-General drew attention to the arrangements by which the themes for the coordination segment are selected in the same year that the Council considers them. In that regard, he recalled the view that he had expressed in his report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1992 on the subject of revitalization of the Council, that: 1/

> "It would be useful to maintain a multi-year work programme in respect of themes for the coordination segment. General Assembly resolution 45/264 anticipates that discussions on the themes should focus attention on the activities of the United Nations system in selected economic and social areas, taking into account the report of the Secretary-General as chairman of ACC, which should contain a system-wide assessment of the status of coordination with regard to the themes and include recommendations as appropriate. The Secretary-General has been constrained in preparing the system-wide assessments on the selected coordination themes for 1992 owing to the relatively short time between the organizational session of the Council at the beginning of February 1992, at which time the Council selected the themes, and the commencement of the substantive session of the Council at the end of June 1992. The limited time placed at his disposal has made it difficult to engage in system-wide collection and analysis of data and consultations with the specialized agencies or in the identification of recommendations, which the Council would expect such reports to contain. As it is, the reports have not been made available six weeks or sufficiently before the opening of the Council, which is a matter for regret. The Secretary-General would therefore wish to suggest to the Council that it retain a multi-year work programme of themes on a roll-over basis with respect to the discussions to take place in the coordination segment of the Council."

5. The Secretary-General continues to believe that it would be preferable for the Council to decide on the themes for the coordination segment at a time earlier than the organizational session of the Council in the year during which the themes will be considered. In that regard, it is noted that subsidiary bodies of the Council, as well as the General Assembly itself, have begun to address requests and convey suggestions to the Economic and Social Council on the selection of themes for the coordination segment. This development indicates that the work of the coordination segment is attracting increasing interest. In the interests of ensuring an orderly process in a broad and balanced context for the selection of themes, however, it would be best if the Council itself could determine the themes. Arrangements to have themes selected

well in advance, perhaps in the context of the substantive session of the Council, would achieve this aim.

6. In his previous report, the Secretary-General had suggested that "there is still room for improvement in the organization of the coordination segment if the recommendations of resolution 45/264 are to be fully implemented" (A/47/534, para. 19). The Council decided, at its organizational session of 1993, that "the coordination segment would reach agreed conclusions containing specific recommendations on matters related to coordination addressed to the various parts of the United Nations system for implementation". 2/ The fact that the Council, at its substantive session of 1993, reached "agreed conclusions" on the two selected themes represents progress in the direction of ensuring that the outcome of the coordination segment is considered fully authoritative by Member States and by the organizations of the United Nations system to which the outcome is also addressed.

7. The Council's "agreed conclusions" have been communicated to the executive heads of the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and arrangements are being worked out for the preparation of the reports on the implementation of the recommendations.

III. OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES SEGMENT

8. In his report to the substantive session of the Council in 1992, the Secretary-General had suggested that "more thought may yet need to be given by the Council as to how to strengthen its institutional capacity to deal with the issue of operational activities for development of the United Nations system". 3/ The proposals currently under consideration in the context of the ongoing negotiations would appear to have considerable potential, if adopted, to meeting that objective.

IV. JOINT MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME AND COORDINATION AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION

9. In his progress report to the last session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General had commented that:

> "A number of issues have emerged affecting the full implementation of these recommendations. In this regard, it may be noted that with the establishment of a coordination segment by the Council, a high-level dialogue between the executive heads of the agencies and Member States now takes place, in that context, on a regular basis. It would, therefore, seem appropriate to review the arrangements for the ACC/CPC Joint Meetings which might now be more appropriately held at the senior official level" (A/47/534, para. 8).

10. The twenty-seventh series of joint meetings took place on 27 October 1993 on the theme "Results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and their implications for the United Nations system". Representation of ACC members was at the senior official level, in most

instances the senior representatives on the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development. This arrangement has led to a substantive dialogue on coordination issues of mutual interest. The Secretary-General considers that, should the institution of joint meetings continue to be maintained, they should be organized in the future along similar lines. The representatives of the members of ACC could be the senior substantive officials in the area chosen for review by the joint meetings.

Notes

1/ E/1992/86, para. 6.

2/ Economic and Social Council decision 1993/205, para. (b).

3/ E/1992/86, para. 13.